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C O N F I D E N T I A L LJUBLJANA 000386

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/RUS (SZPILA)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/26/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [RS](#) [GG](#) [EUN](#) [SI](#)

SUBJECT: TFGG01: SLOVENIA OPPOSES RECOGNITION OF BREAKAWAY
REGIONS, SAYS COUNCIL TO SUPPORT MERKEL'S "NEIGHBORHOOD
CONFERENCE"

REF: A. SECSTATE 90978

[1](#)B. LJUBLJANA 0371

Classified By: DCM Brad Freden, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Slovenia strongly opposes Russian recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, saying that it would be a setback to diplomatic efforts leading up to the September 1 European Council meeting. The Council is expected to endorse Chancellor Merkel's call for a "neighborhood conference" on Georgia. Slovenia will push for a statement in support of Georgia at the upcoming Bled Strategic Forum. END SUMMARY

2.(C) DCM met August 26 with FM Rupel's Chief of Staff, Ales Balut, to urge Slovenia to oppose Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Balut acknowledged that a decision by President Medvedev to follow the lead of the Russian parliament by recognizing the two breakaway regions would deal a major blow to European diplomatic efforts, and he undertook to pass ref A points to FM Rupel. Slovenia will continue to support the EU's efforts to work with Russia to implement the Sarkozy plan, Balut said, and will push back on Russian efforts to equate Kosovo with South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Balut made reference to a proposal by Chancellor Merkel for a "neighborhood conference" on Georgia, saying that he expected the European Council to adopt Merkel's proposal when it meets on September 1. He also praised the Finnish OSCE Chairman-in-Office for his proposals regarding observers, humanitarian assistance and pullback of forces. Balut noted that Slovenia was already in the process of identifying participants for any observer mission that might be sent to Georgia under EU or OSCE auspices.

[1](#)3. (C) Balut said that Slovenia would push for a statement supporting Georgia to come out of the Bled Strategic Forum, which takes place in Slovenia August 31-September 1. Originally billed as a discussion on energy and climate change, the conference has been somewhat refocused in light of recent events. Among those slated to participate in the conference are Russian DFM Alexander Yakovenko, Gazprom Chair Alexey Miller, Georgian Deputy PM Georgi Baramidze, OSCE SecGen Marc Perrin de Brichambuat, and the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic and Latvia. In closing, Balut reiterated what his boss recently told the Ambassador: that the EU remains politically handicapped by member states' dependence on Russian energy (ref B).

[1](#)4. (C) COMMENT. Slovenia does not have the diplomatic heft to confront Russia bilaterally or to influence decisively events in Brussels, but their weight is clearly on our side of the scale. The Bled Forum is another story: Slovenia,

as host, should be able to tip the scales in Georgia's favor. We will continue to urge them to do so.

GHAFARI